



US Forest Service Aviation Safety Alert



No. FS 09-01

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Subject: Rappel Operations Equipment and Procedural Check
Area of Concern: Rappel Operations
Distribution: Rappel Bases

Discussion: This morning at approximately 1015 PDT a rappel accident occurred resulting in a fatal fall of a Forest Service rappeller. The facts we have on hand are that the helicopter and crew were assigned to the Backbone incident on the Six Rivers, NF west of Redding, CA. The crew was conducting a routine rappel proficiency mission involving in a Bell 212 HP.

A Chief's level accident investigation is being conducted. The Forest Service is a party to the National Transportation Safety Board investigation.

Recommendation: We are advising all rappel units to review the Interagency Helicopter Rappel Guide (IHRG) Chapter 3, Rappel Equipment to assure that all rappel equipment meets the current standard. Also review Lesson Plan 7, Helicopter Mock-up on pages D-12 through D-16 of the IHRG.

Your review of equipment and procedures must be accomplished prior to the next operating period. The National Office is not calling for a stand-down of the rappel program at this time, until we can determine the specifics of what occurred and corrective actions to be taken. However, Region 5 has suspended all rappel activities until further notice.

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